

# A Further New Member of the *Poecilmitis thysbe* (L.) Group (Lepidoptera: Lycaenidae) from the Roggeveld Mountains

By C. G. C. DICKSON

No. 23

This beautiful little insect was discovered on the Roggeveld Escarpment in November 1969, and it is so distinct from other taxa of the *P. thysbe* group that its treatment as a separate species appears to be quite justified. The male (the only sex identified as yet) shows affinity to *Poecilmitis beaufortia* (described by the present writer in *Ent. Rec.*, **78**: pp. 109-110, Pl. IV, 15th May 1966—see also *idem*, **82**: pp. 93-95, Pl. V, 15th April 1970, for particulars of *P. beaufortia* from the Roggeveld Mountains) but, amongst other features, can be distinguished at once from this species by the considerably reduced expanse of the silvery violaceous-blue in the forewings. It is also a smaller butterfly. The male genitalia have been found to be very similar in closely allied members of the *thysbe* group.

*Poecilmitis violescens* spec. nov.

*Male. Upperside*

*Forewing.* Blue extends up to (or at least partially up to) the black spot in cell, but leaves a prominent space of orange between this spot and the black discocellular mark; it then runs outwardly, in area lb. and either stops short of (as in the holotype) or reaches the black spot in this area and, extending along innermargin, finally reaches the lower end of the black border of the distal-margin. Costal black edging narrow; the usual black spots of the *thysbe* group clearly developed, and the discocellular one the largest; the black border of the distal-margin fairly broad. Cilia chequered black and white or whitish (worn in the holotype), with the white spaces mostly very small but (in the paratype) sharply defined. A shifting violaceous-pink lustre extends over part of the orange area of the wing, beyond the violaceous-blue itself.

*Hindwing.* Blue area spreads out from the base up to about two-fifths of the length of the wing (a little more in the paratype); the violaceous-pink lustre widespread over the orange field and (in the paratype at least) extending to within 1 mm. of the wing-margin. The black spotting in the orange area very poorly developed; wing-margin partially edged with black, with a definite, narrow border down to about vein 5. Innermarginal concavity dark greyish. Cilia black at the ends of the veins, with white intervening spaces, mixed with orange below the definite black border (but the cilia frayed in the holotype).

*Underside.*

*Forewing.* The black spotting in the orange area characteristic of the group (but very well developed in the holotype—as is the submarginal dark streak) and all details of marking, etc., practically as in the description of *P. beaufortia* (*op. cit.*).

*Hindwing.* Substantially as in *P. beaufortia* but in the holotype the dark marking again very pronounced; the general background pale. In the holotype there is (in addition to the more basal dark marking) a specially conspicuous, dark, curved zone of markings beyond the middle of the wing

and confluent with the pale lituræ (not actually metallic) which are present here.

Details relating to the body, etc., are essentially as described for *P. beaufortia*.

Length of forewing: 13-14 mm. (the first measurement that of the holotype).

♂ Holotype, WESTERN CAPE PROVINCE: Summit of Komsberg Pass, S.S.E. of Sutherland, Komsberg Escarpment, 27.xi.1969 (C.G.C.D.); British Museum Reg. No. Rh. 17199.

Paratype in the author's collection, W. CAPE PROVINCE: Roggeveld Escarpment, 18.xi.1969, 1♂ (C.G.C.D.).

In *P. violescens* the distal-margin of the forewing is unusually rounded for a male of this group of *Poecilmitis*.

The first specimen of this butterfly to be caught was taken in a mountainous spot in which the more usual Roggeveld form of *P. beaufortia* was out in considerable numbers; while the later example, which has been used for the holotype, was caught a good many miles to the S.E. of this locality, when the area at the head of the Komsberg Pass was being searched. A species of *Mesembrianthemum* with bright pink flowers to which this specimen had been attracted was also being frequented by *P. beaufortia* and *P. turneri* Riley, but in decidedly small numbers, as conditions were very far from favourable owing to a stiff breeze which was blowing from the south west. This had increased by the following day when, after several hours' intensive search without finding more specimens of *P. violescens*, it was necessary to leave the locality altogether.

This small butterfly is a particularly attractive member of its group, with its beautiful silvery violaceous-blue from the wing-bases and extensive violaceous-pink glow beyond the blue colouring. (The coloration is fully apparent only in the paratype which, although torn, is in fresher condition than the holotype.)

"Blencathra". Cambridge Avenue, St Michael's Estate, Cape Town.

## In Search of Lepidoptera, 1970

By DAVID BROWN

My Butterfly season opened on 26th March with *Aglais urticae* (Linn.) L. at Charlecote—a considerable number of days later than previous years and even as I write these notes in late October the same species is still on the wing near the Michaelmas Daisies.

As regards Moths, although I had run the m.v. trap at home throughout the winter I commenced a series of excursions with the Heath traps covering the whole summer. The first of these was at Oakley Wood (near Warwick) on 30th March when until midnight in predominant birch *Achlya flavicornis* (Linn.) L., *Erannis marginaria* (Fabr.) L., *Biston strataria* (Hufn.) L., *Alsophila ascularia* (Schiff.) L. and *Cerastis rubicosa* (Schiff.) L. were all common. One *Orthosia munda* (Schiff.) L. and a female *A. ascularia* (Schiff.) L. were found on inspection of the tree trunks and herbage with the aid of a torch.

A further visit on 11th April produced the same species but in smaller numbers. On this night, due to the very low temperature, the expedition was abandoned early at 11.20 p.m.